

THE LOSS OF NIGERIAN INDIGENIOUS LANGUAGES AND CULTURE

У статті проаналізовано зникнення корінних мов різних етнічних груп, що призводить до занепаду національної культури Нігерії. Стверджувано, що змінення становища нігерійських мов і культур сприяла б прогресу для розв'язання завдань національного розвитку Нігерії в нинішньому столітті.

Ключові слова: *туземна мова, мультикультура, мова навчання, етнічні групи, мови меншин.*

Disappearance of native languages of different ethnic groups is analysed in the article, that conduces to the decline of national culture of Nigeria. It becomes firmly established that the change of position of nigerian languages and cultures would be instrumental in progress for the decision of tasks of national development of Nigeria in a present century.

Key words: *indigenous language, multiculture, language of studies, ethnic groups, minority languages.*

Nigeria is a nation that is blessed with diverse ethnic groups numbering over 250. These ethnic groups are characterized by different languages, culture and traditions, and every ethnic group is unique in its own way. Nigeria as a multi-lingual society has about 400 different languages, with three major languages, Igbo and Yoruba [5]. Many are of the opinion that Nigerian languages have an inferior status in relation to English and French languages. We should correct the erroneous impression created by people as we attach relevance to our indigenous languages and give them the adequate attention they deserve. It should be emphasized here that no language (foreign or indigenous) is inferior or superior to the other. Every language has the capacity to function adequately in whatever role it is assigned. The indigenous languages in Nigeria can be used as medium of instruction and for education (subject for study) in formal or informal education. All that is needed is a carefully planned and executed language policy transparently championed by the government of Nigeria; a language policy that is focused on linguistic equity for both exogenous and indigenous languages.

Along ethnic composition, Nigeria can be divided into three major nations: Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba. The population of Nigerian-Hausa is about 30 million people (except for the Hausa, who live in other countries of West Africa)' the Yoruba is about 22 million while the Igbo is about 18 million. The remaining ethnic groups are in one way or the other related to the three major ethnic groups, in language, tradition and in cultural factor such as folklore, ethnic values or in terms of religious consideration, 80% of the Hausas are Muslims, 60% of the Yorubas are Muslim. While 95% of the Igbo are Christians. The differences among the three major ethnic groups are observed in their mode or style of dressing and the way they speak English language. The Yorubas and the Hausas prefer to talk with their relatives in their native languages while the Igbos always opt for English.

Diverse national composition of the Nigerian population is due to the complexity of the language situation in Nigeria.

The second official language in Nigeria is Yoruba. This language has 30 dialects, which have no problems understanding each other. The literary form was created based on the Yoruba dialect using the Latin alphabet. Igbo ranks third among the Nigerian languages. It is the principal language of the Igbo people, an ethnic group in southeastern Nigeria. There are approximately 24 million speakers of this language who live mostly in Nigeria and are primarily of Igbo origin. It is important to note that Igbo is a recognized minority language of Equatorial Guinea. Igbo is a local language which takes its written form in the Latin script, as was introduced by British colonial masters. Apart from the Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa in Nigeria, there are hundreds of other languages, so called (the minority languages) of which almost all are subject or closely related to one of these three major languages. The number of speakers of these minority languages varies significantly from one another. Some of the languages cover only few villages. Communication in those languages usually runs in the family and social spheres; professional sphere is related to the implementation of works and commercial transaction.

It is also the opinion of many linguistic experts that Nigerian languages have an inferior status in relation to English language. This is because many Nigerians have been made to believe that there is nothing good in their languages and cultures and that has resulted in rejection of anything indigenous in pursuit of anything foreign. For Nigeria to get to where it is looking forward to, the study of Nigerian languages and culture in our system should be given its rightful position.

It is true that the Federal Government has introduced some measures to enhance the status of Nigerian languages alongside English, since they have been recognized in the 1979 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. It means that there is a place for the mother-tongue from the early primary to junior secondary school, and up to the senior secondary level of education. There were points of hindrances, delays and discouragement to the development of our indigenous languages. One of such was that the stakeholders in language studies were the early missionaries who colonized Nigeria. The missionaries had overwhelming influence and dominance in virtually all spheres of our life and enterprise. In the area of language, the missionaries promulgated an education ordinance that provided momentary inducement to schools and teachers to access. The monetary inducements according to were called “grants-in-aid” [2].

The school, the church and other agents of socialization must contribute meaningfully to the revival of our indigenous languages. It is indeed a clarion call to all and sundry not to let our rich cultural heritage embedded in our indigenous languages to die. Eze opines that the only impediment to the successful use of indigenous languages is that, they have not been fully developed to cope with the demands of formal education [4, 5]. I am of the opinion that all the numerous indigenous languages in Nigeria can be used in education or as a school subject in formal education. All that is needed is the successful implementation of language policy by the government of Nigeria.

English language was used in the colonial era to unite and govern the various multi ethnic, multicultural and multi lingual citizens of Nigeria. English language does not only

serve the above function, it also functions as the medium of instruction at all levels of education in the country. After the attainment of political independence in 1960, pre-eminence was given to English language. Many important figures and educationalists began to protest openly for English to be replaced as an official language by one of our indigenous languages. English as indicated much earlier has over a century, continued to enjoy the pride of place in the nation's educational system.

The linguistic diversity of Nigeria can profit the nation if a multilingual language in which all classes of language are given due recognition, is embarked upon. As the languages are used for socio-cultural political, economic and even the spiritual needs of the people and also serve as a powerful tool for preservation and expression of our rich cultural heritage. The fact remains that it is not ethnicity and linguistic diversity that constructs social problems in Nigeria, rather it is the politicization of these differences that is the problem.

The government policy on language should devoid of political manipulations rather stringent steps towards the sensitization of citizenry on the need to accept a genuine policy on languages and look at it as an important instrument for national development.

The federal government should institute an intervention programme that will facilitate the teaching and learning and of indigenous languages in our tertiary institutions with a view to producing teachers that would help in developing those languages to their fullest potential. The government should produce a definite format for all states to follow in the implementation of the national policy on education with regard to mother tongue.

It is evident that majority of teachers in the public schools use the bilingual medium despite the stipulation of the use of the mother tongue medium in the lower primary schools in the national policy on education (NPE). There is a need that a more definitive pedagogical approach in the medium of instruction at the lower primary classes. Textbooks and educational materials in the Nigerian languages should be developed while absolute ones should be improved upon or upgraded to cope with the present realities of modern education in our contemporarily society.

The government should make the study of Igbo language compulsory at all levels of education. This will make the teachers and students to be dedicated because it is the only way our cultural heritage should be preserved. Igbo teachers and students should be motivated to encourage people to undertake the study of Igbo language more serious.

The fact remains that the teaching of the three major indigenous languages, Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba as a second language is faced with both logistic and conceptual problems. To tackle these problems, the teaching and learning of the three officially approved Nigerian languages should be made compulsory in our schools and colleges. Egonu puts it succinctly that foreign languages cannot be the languages that favour and promote the creativity and originality of the African mind [2]. According to him, the indigenous language is the umbilical cord that provides the essential ingredient for the flowering of creative thinking and the originality that

Many problems are facing Igbo language teachers and the language itself. This is one of the reasons why Igbo has not made remarkable progress as a subject for study in our schools. Such problems include lack of staff recognition, professional development, inadequate provisions of teaching materials, and non-involvement of secondary school

teachers in major school decisions and Igbo languages curriculum review and implementation. There is also insufficiency in teaching Igbo language, lack of Government patronage, attitude of Igbo people towards their language and many others.

The main purpose of this study was to find the cause of the death and loss of indigenous languages and cultures. And suggest ways of promoting them, and also advocate for the teaching and learning of those languages. The study aimed at finding the following: workable solution to the problem; the best ways to motivate the teachers for increased productivity; the problems that may arise if they are not motivated; suitable solutions to the problems created if they are not motivated; to restore the status of indigenous languages and culture.

The population of study was all Igbo teachers in some Secondary schools in Aboh Mbaise Local Government Area of Imo State. The sample of the study was made of (45) Igbo teachers comprising (25) Junior Secondary School (JSS) Igbo teachers randomly selected through stratified random sampling techniques from the (20) secondary schools in Aboh Mbaise Local Government Area of Imo State. Descriptive survey design was used for the study.

Fifty questionnaire items titled a secondary school Igbo teachers' questionnaire was used for data collection. The instrument was validated by the researcher before being used for data collection. A four point rating scales of Highly Agreed, Agreed, Highly disagreed and disagreed which was assigned numerical values: 4, 3, 2, and 1 in that order was developed based on the specific purpose of the study. Forty five copies of the questionnaire were administered to twenty five Senior Secondary School and twenty Junior Secondary School Igbo teachers respectively and retrieved by the researchers after the some days.

Based on the response of the teachers concerned, the researcher was able to find out the strength of each rating scale used.

The responses of research questions above show that Igbo teachers should be motivated in order to increase their productivity. On the other hand, if they are not given adequate incentive, there will be a serious problem in the society because our cultural identity will be extinguished and lost forever. There are also adequate remedies to the problems so that Igbo race will not lose their identity and cultural diversity as a tribe. Every language has the capacity to adequately function in whatever role it has been assigned to. However, the only impediment to the successful use of indigenous languages in Nigeria in formal education is that they have not been fully developed to cope with the demands of formal education [6].

The fact that the English language has come to stay in Nigeria is not contestable. However, the selection or the birth of a language that will stand at par with English is needed. The choice can be done through the untiring effort of the government, which is guided by a functional language policy.

The teaching of Igbo Language both as first language and second language has been bedeviled with a lot of problems. The challenges can only be taken care of if concerted effort is made through enlightenment campaigns, award of scholarship and conduct of researches on the study of Igbo language and other forms of motivation. There is no doubt that these efforts would make the Igbo language attractive, and comparable to other

international languages.

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ЗНИКНЕННЯ КОРИННИХ НІГЕРІЙСЬКИХ МОВ І КУЛЬТУР

Нігерія – це країна, у якій проживають різні етнічні групи. Вони характеризуються різними мовами, культурою й традиціями, і кожна етнічна група по-своєму унікальна. Нігерія як багатомовне суспільство має близько 400 різних мов, основними з яких є мови хауса, іґбо та йоруба. Багато хто вважає, що нігерійські мови мають нижчий статус порівняно з англійською та французькою мовами. Кожна мова має здатність адекватно функціонувати незалежно від покладеної на неї ролі. Мови корінних народів Нігерії можуть бути використані як засіб навчання й освіти в межах освіти.

Різноманітний національний склад нігерійського населення зумовлений складністю мовної ситуації в Нігерії. На думку багатьох лінгвістичних експертів, нігерійські мови мають нижчий статус порівняно з англійською мовою. Для того щоб Нігерія могла досягти того, чого вона очікує, вивчення нігерійських мов і культури в нашій системі має посісти своє законне місце.

Школа, церква та інші суб'єкти соціалізації повинні зробити вагомий внесок у відродження мов корінних народів. Усі численні мови корінних народів Нігерії можуть використовуватися в системі освіти або як шкільний предмет у системі формальної освіти. Англійська мова використовувалася в колоніальну епоху для керування різними багатоетнічними, багатокультурними та багатомовними громадянами Нігерії. Англійська мова не тільки виконує вказану функцію, але і є засобом навчання на всіх рівнях освіти в країні. Мовне розмаїття Нігерії може принести користь країні, якщо буде впроваджено систему, у якій всі класи мов отримали б належне визнання. Мова використовується для соціально-культурних, політичних, економічних і духовних потреб народу, а також є потужним інструментом збереження й вираження багатства культурної спадщини країни. Засоби масової інформації повинні взяти на себе відповідальність за популяризацію

нігерійських мов, орфографія яких повинна бути стандартизована, щоб відповідати вимогам сучасної освіти. Вивчення мови основних корінних народів необхідно зробити обов'язковим на всіх рівнях освіти. Федеральному уряду слід розробити програму заходів, яка буде сприяти викладання і вивчення цих мов у вищих навчальних закладах Нігерії, з тим щоб підготувати викладачів, які допомогли б у розвитку мов повною мірою. Уряд повинен розробити для всіх держав певний формат здійснення національної політики в галузі освіти щодо рідної мови. Підручники й навчальні матеріали нігерійськими мовами повинні бути модернізовані відповідно до реалій сучасної освіти в нашому суспільстві.

Залишається фактом, що викладання трьох основних мов корінних народів – хауса, іґбо і йоруба – як других мов стикається як із матеріально-технічними, так і концептуальними проблемами. Для вирішення цих проблем необхідно зробити обов'язковим викладання й вивчення трьох офіційно затверджених нігерійських мов у нігерійських школах і коледжах. Збереження мов корінних народів Нігерії збереже культурну ідентичність та історичну різноманітність цих народів.

Ключові слова: *туземна мова, мультикультура, мова навчання, етнічні групи, мови меншин.*

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